

HB 929 -- MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

SPONSOR: Cornejo

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Committee on Health Care Policy by a vote of 10 to 0.

This bill changes the laws regarding the detention of a person for the purpose of mental health evaluations and treatment under Chapter 632, RSMo. The bill defines "gravely disabled" as a condition in which a person, as a result of mental illness or mental disorder, lacks judgment in the management of his or her resources and in the conduct of his or her social relations to the extent that his or her health or safety is significantly endangered and he or she lacks the capacity to understand that this is so. A person of any age can be gravely disabled, but the term must not include a person who has a developmental disability by reason of the person's developmental disability alone.

The basis for determining to detain or release a person for the purpose of evaluation and treatment must now include a person who suffers from a mental disorder and presents a likelihood of serious harm to himself or to others or is gravely disabled.

The bill adds Boone County to the counties that may employ an additional assistant prosecuting attorney and investigative and clerical personnel to assist a prosecuting attorney in his or her duties relating to mental health and mental health facilities with the annual compensation for the employees paid out of the state treasury from funds appropriated for that purpose.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that the bill will help families with children and young adults who are starting to develop a mental disorder but have not yet harmed themselves or others. The bill allows the parents to petition for evaluation before the mental disorder escalates to the point of harming someone. The bill is meant to help parents, who see their child getting sick, help the child before anyone is harmed. Currently, someone must be harmed or threatened before the parent can petition the court for assistance. The bill also provides funding for Boone County to assist with the adjudication and evaluation costs that occur as a result of having a hospital with a mental health facility. Every other facility in the state is receiving the funding and somehow Boone County was left out.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Cornejo; and Richard Gowdy, Department of Mental Health.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

